/xiii/ Introduction

101 The Bambara tribes which form part of the Mandé group are at
131 present spread out in French Sudan from the 11th to the 14th degrees latitude north and from the 7th to the 11th degrees longitude west. Three groups which have settled respectively in the circle of Issa Ber, in Kaarta, and in the circle of Odienné are noticeably separated from the central group which occupies the shores of the Niger around Bamako and Ségou.

105 The Bambara live in small villages in the savanna; they practice primarily agriculture (millet, digitaria /Fonio/, rice, maize, etc.), but also herding and gardening. The shore dwellers of the Niger are fishermen and live in symbiotie relationships with the Bozo who taught them fishing techniques and who are generally recognized as the first inhabitants of these regions.

173 The Bambara state that they came from Mandé. This region, where the successive capitals of the ancient kingdom of Mali were situated, has long attracted the attention of research workers (1).

1. See J. Vidal, Au sujet de l'emplacement du Mali (ou Melli /on the subject of the Mali site/), pp. 251-268; Le véritable emplacement du Mali /The true site of the Mali/, pp. 606-619. This author designates by Mali I to IV the four villages of Dyélibakoro, Niani, Maninkoura, and Kangaba, which had been successively the royal city. See also Ch. Monteil, Les Empires du Mali /The empires of Mali/, p. 13.

Moreover, it is "the center from which radiated forty-four tribes at present spread out in the area between the Atlantic coast, the Senegal, and the Niger, or to Dahomey" (2). The region indicated above also

2. See D. Zahan. Aperçu sur la pensée théogonique des Dogon /Survey of theogonic thought of the Dogon/, pp. 113-133. This author gives the name of the tribes originating

[3] Chapter 1

Origin and History

Preliminaries

131 As they have for a long time past, the Bambara today occupy in compact groups a vast region on either side of the Niger, which comprises most of the territory in the circles [administration division] of Bammako, Bougouni and Ségou in the French colony of the Upper Senegal and Niger.

162 According to the census (1), the following list shows the

1. In Haut-Sénégal et Niger [The Upper Senegal and Niger], by Delafosse.

distribution of the Bambara in that colony:

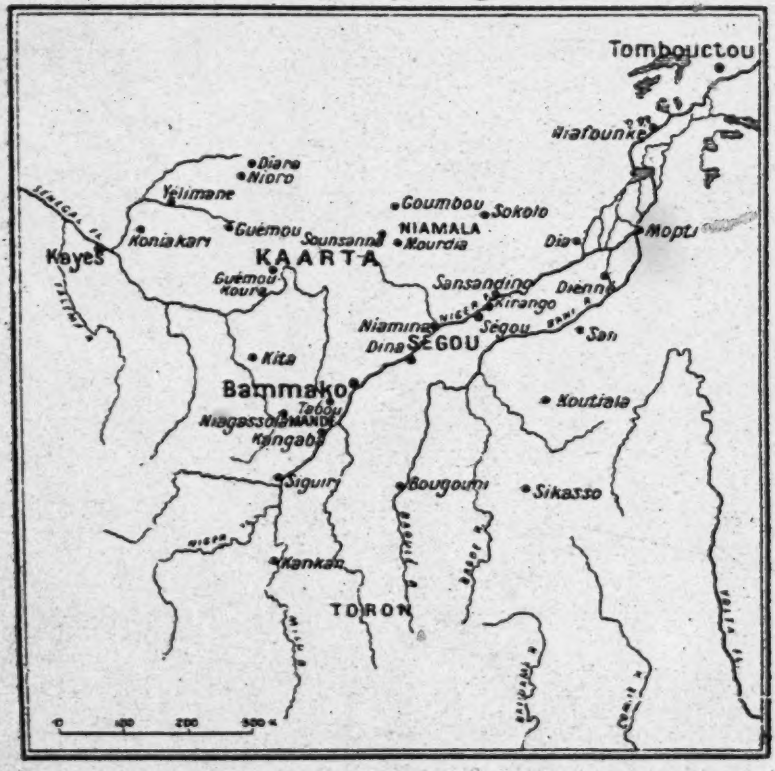
Circle of Bougouni	146,966
" " Bammako	104,216
" " Ségou	109,758
" " Sikasso	30,000
" " Kita	2,339
" " Bafoulabé	2,100
" " Koutiala	30,055
" " Goumbou	22,110
" " San	20,103
" " Sokolo	19,996
" " Diénné	17,247
" " Niafounké	16,000
" " Nioro	9,355
" " Mopti	7,277
" " Bandiagara	928
Total	538,450

After the Mossi, this is the largest group in the colony of Upper Senegal and Niger.

121 This work deals only with the Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta since it has already been noted that, save for their specifically local history, [4] a study of their concepts and institutions is valid in general for all of the Bambara.

103 131 It is exceedingly difficult, besides, to be entirely certain as to which of the Bambara actually belong to the Kaarta and

[133]



Ségou areas since the two designations do not correspond to any very exact geographical region. When a native speaks of Kaarta or of Ségou, he only vaguely understands the terms, and this with good reason.

101 103 131 I have noted elsewhere (1) that, etymologically speaking, the

1. In my work Les Khassonké [The Kasonke], which appeared in the series, Revue du Monde Musulman.

101 word which we write and pronounce Kaarta means "country of
103 the Karé" or, more accurately, "the group of the Karé." Wher-
131 ever there are Karé people they are called, in the Soninké language, Karu-ta, [5] which is contracted to Karta. From this we made Kaarta because we misheard the long first "a." The word Kaarta designates a particular area only because of the people who inhabit it, and its value as a geographical expression is acquired only by extension. Among the natives the term is used for various areas within the region which extends from Goumbou to Koniakari and from Nioro to the Senegal River. On our maps, Kaarta is bounded by Kingui on the north, Diomboko on the west, Senegal and Bélédougou on the south, and Kaniaga on the east. However, all of these names of cantons themselves have very vague meanings.

101 For the purpose of the present work, the word Kaarta takes
103 on a special meaning. The Bambara who founded a clan at
131 Sounsan-na in the Karé country are called Karta-n-ko in the
614 Soninké language and Karta-n-ka-u (the Kaarta people) in the Bambara language. As a result, Kaarta has become the name of the areas occupied by the clan in its various peregrinations.

The "people of Ségou" acquired their name in quite a different manner, since they were named for Ségou, the capital of the clan. The country of Ségou should be understood strictly to allude to the to-da which, to be described in chapter 5, was, by and large the area surrounding Ségou and occupied by the chief and his family and followers. In a wider sense, the country of Ségou referred to all the territory under the authority of the Ségou clan. At the height of the clan's power, "the country of Ségou" occupied both banks of the Niger, following the axis of the river from Kangaba to Timbuktu.

101 Our European need to have things clearly defined may be
131 satisfied by having the territorial limits of Kaarta and Ségou set
631 forth on a map, but on the native level, with which this book is primarily concerned, such local definition has little relevance. These empires did not aim to dominate any given area but rather sought to exploit as large a number of individuals as possible without regard to country or race.

144 Third group (southern): four peoples, the Diallonké [Dialonke], the Samo, the Samorho, and the Sia; plus four small tribes of doubtful classification, the Blé, the Natioro, the Ouara, and the Sembla.

More recent studies by Urvoy, Dr. Pales, and Mlle. Tassin de Saint-Péreuse involving very numerous measurements will soon permit determination of the racial characteristics of the Sudanese populations and the establishment of a new classification.

B. Geographical Distribution

131 In his study of the Bambara of Ségou, Charles Monteil tells us that it is impossible to determine what the precise boundaries of the Bambara empire were, because a frontier as we understand it has no meaning for the Black. The empires did not seek to dominate such and such a region; their goal was, above all, the exploitation of the greatest possible number of individuals, without regard to localities or races.

131 At the present time, the Encyclopédie coloniale et maritime
162 [Colonial and Maritime Encyclopedia] considers that [3] the Bambara form a group of about a million individuals who extend west-east from the region of Siguirio as far as Macina along both sides of the Niger and the Bani rivers, and south-north from the Ivory Coast and Upper Volta to Sahel de Nioro. In addition, there are 40,000 in Senegal: peanut farmers near Kaolack, Thiès, and Diourbel, and captives at Fouta Toro, Saint-Louis, etc. But they are most numerous in the circles [a "circle" is an administrative division] of Bamako (310,000), Ségou (190,000), and Bougouni (110,000). To
563 these one may add 125,000 Métis [mixed bloods], Peul-Bambara, of whom 72,000 live in the Bougouni circle alone.

131 More precisely, the great mass of the Bambara is distributed
619 in a region that may be delimited as follows.

To the northwest, three tribes have been catalogued in the Kaarta: the Dianguirté in the circle of Nioro, the Niamassa at Nioro, and the Massassi to the south of Nioro.

To the north, in the Sahel, the region of Bakounou and Waghadou is inhabited by the Kalongo tribe.

To the northeast, the Bambara live in the Macina, the Issa Ber, the region of Goundam, and up to Timbuktu.

|3| To the east, they are found in the Bendougou, Minianka
619 (the banks of the Niger and the Bani to the south of San and Ségou being occupied by the caste of Somono fishermen), and Kénédougou regions.

To the south, in the Ouassoulou.

To the southwest, in the Manding, the Bélédougou, and Fouladougou regions.

To the west, in the Kangaran, the Bambouk, and the Guidimaka regions on the banks of the Senegal.

In short, the habitat of the Bambara lies within a large V formed by the upper Senegal and the upper Niger.

C. Neighboring Tribes

|0| The Bambara are the most important people of the western Sudan and of the southern circles. Nevertheless, they are very mingled with other populations according to the regions we shall further define.

Among these other populations the principal ones are:

The Peul (Foula [Fulah], Foulbé [Fulbe], Fellata [Felata], a nomadic population found throughout West Africa from Senegal to the Egyptian Sudan. They speak the same language as the Toucouleur [Tukolor] Popular.

The Malinké, an important Mandingue people who speak a dialect close to Banmana and who are found in Guinea and in the Sudan (Satadougou, Nioro, Kayes, Bafoulabé, Kita, Bamako, Bougouni).

The Kassonké, who live in the Senegal Valley upriver from Kayes, are of mixed Malinké and Toucouleur origin; they speak a dialect close to Malinké.

The Sarakolé, Soninké or Marka, are an ancient people linked to the history of the empire of Ghana; they speak a Mandingue dialect related to Bambara. Those of Kouroumari speak Bambara and are of mixed Bambara blood.

[4] In Mourdiah, out of 14,000 Marka, a large proportion is Bambarized.

The Songhaï, a people of the middle Niger, have swarmed from the region of Niamey up to Lake Débo and Djenné.

[19] CHAPTER 3

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

I. Natural Regions

131 The Bambara live in a region stretching between the 11th and 14th degrees of latitude north and between the 7th and 11th degrees of longitude west. They are grouped around the upper Senegal and upper Niger in the zone of basins bordered on the south by the Fouta-Djallon and the Guinea Ridge. The land is divided into several natural regions.

A. The Upper Niger

133 135 Framed by the outer ranges of the Fouta-Djallon and the cliffs of the Manding plateau, witness of the Pre-Cambrian shelf, the region is essentially schistose, with small veins of quartz and chimneys of dolerite; there are large intrusions of granite to the north 50 kilometers from Bamako, to the northwest and north of Siguiri, and to the south at the approach to the massif of the Fouta-Djallon. All the region is rich in gold. Several centers have long been exploited [316] by the natives by means of a network of narrow shafts which reach down to the auriferous seam. The whole region is encrusted with a shell of iron.

133 The region of the upper Niger is an immense plain covered with mammilliform hills. The plain rises gradually from the pass of Bamako to the mountains of the south, broken only by occasional dikes, such as that of Kouroussa-Kankan. The overall relief is very simple and monotonous; the local relief is very animated and varied because of the network of valleys hemmed in by steep cliffs 10 to 12 meters high.

The Niger, fed by the Tinkisso, the Milo, the Fié and, the Sankarani, reaches Bamako with a width of about 900 meters. It flows through a plain three to four kilometers wide in a southwest-northeast direction up to Timbuktu. It undergoes an annual rise which depends solely on the amount of rainfall. From Kouroussa to 132 Bamako the first rains at the end of April, and then of May and June, begin to feed the river; the flood period begins in June. At the time